

## ABSTRACT

The present invention relates to means for the detection and characterization of nucleic acid sequences, as well as variations in nucleic acid sequences. The present invention also relates to methods for forming a nucleic acid cleavage structure on a target  
5 sequence and cleaving the nucleic acid cleavage structure in a site-specific manner. The structure-specific nuclease activity of a variety of enzymes is used to cleave the target-dependent cleavage structure, thereby indicating the presence of specific nucleic acid sequences or specific variations thereof.

09982667-101801